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Statement by William Brencick, Minister Counselor for Political Affairs, on the occasion of the report of the Secretary-General on Darfur, in the Security Council, September 11, 2006

Thank you to Secretary-General Annan for his sobering and even alarming briefing today. His call for urgent action to address the Darfur crisis should resonate all the way from this chamber to the Presidential Palace in Khartoum. We welcome as well the representatives of the African Union, the Arab League and the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

We heard from the Sudanese Chargé just now that his delegation is always open for dialogue with the United Nations. But this raises the question of where his delegation was on August 28 when they were invited to a meeting of the Security Council intended to make clear to the Government of National Unity our concern about the situation in Darfur, our conviction that outside assistance is essential, and our desire to work with the Government of National Unity to reach a satisfactory outcome.

In the Sudanese Chargé's whole lengthy intervention today, the one critical point that he left out was a stated commitment by the Government of National Unity to address the situation in Darfur by consenting to the deployment of UN forces and by cooperating in the implementation of resolution 1706.

We have already heard OCHA Under-Secretary-General Jan Egeland describe the situation in Darfur as a "man-made catastrophe of an unprecedented scale," which he said would get even worse if a political solution were not reached imminently. We have also all read remarks from UNCHR head Antonio Guterres that Darfur is on the verge of a "terrible disaster" and a "humanitarian catastrophe" if the Government of National Unity does not allow UN forces into the region. We have now just heard the same assessment from the Secretary-General himself.

Aid agencies have consistently asserted that their work is impossible without a UN force on the ground to provide security.

How many people need to describe the horror of the situation in Darfur or how much worse does this situation have to get before the Government of National Unity gets the message? Adoption of resolution 1706 was a first step; the second and more crucial step is to implement it. Rather than assuming this responsibility, the Government of National Unity has indicated it would take a step backward by forcing the expulsion of AMIS troops by the end of this month, leaving a vacuum in Darfur for the Government of National Unity to fill with its own troops in an untenable military solution.

We must support the African Union and AMIS at this critical point in maintaining their role in addressing the Darfur crisis. If the AU Peace and Security Council decides to extend AMIS through the end of the year, everyone, including the Government of National Unity, must do all we can to support it. This includes immediately implementing resolution 1706, which provides for robust assistance to AMIS.

The Council agrees that the transition of AMIS to a UN operation is the best option available for all. We will circulate this afternoon a draft Presidential Statement whose purpose is to allow the Council to speak for the international community with one voice; and to say to the Government of National Unity, work with us, because the situation in Darfur cannot stand.